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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 13, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES J. FLEISCHMANN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

CONCESSIONS TO CUBA ARE JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, as an 8-year-old child, I was forced to flee Havana, Cuba, with my family for the shores of the United States of America, this shining city on a hill and a beacon of hope and freedom to the world.

The Cuban American Members of Congress are all united by our love of this great country and our love and respect for freedom, for democracy, and

the rule of law because of where we come from and whom we represent. For us, these principles aren't concepts that we take for granted. We cherish them because we know the alternative.

We need look no further than just 60 miles south of the United States to see the alternative, where the Castro regime has been entrenched for over 55 years and ruling the island with an iron fist.

This is Berta Soler, one of the leaders of Las Damas de Blanco, the Ladies in White, a peaceful dissident group. Berta has been detained so many times, she says to me, that she has lost count. That is why we stand united in a bipartisan manner, in steadfast opposition to any attempts by the Obama administration to normalize relations with the Castro regime.

President Obama's audacity of hubris has resulted in one exercise in folly after another, and engagement with Cuba is the height of that folly. What have we gotten in return? Let me turn to the next poster. This poster has a list of some of the many wanted criminals who have sought refuge and have gotten it in Castro's Cuba. We haven't gotten any reforms from this deal.

We haven't gotten the return of these dozens of criminals that Castro has been harboring because they have fled from justice in America, like convicted New Jersey State trooper killer Joanne Chesimard. After this deal was announced, the Castro regime said: Oh, no, all of these people, we will give them asylum. The FBI has put her on the most wanted terrorist list; yet Castro says: We will give them asylum.

What have the Cuban people received as a result of this administration's concessions? Well, 53 political prisoners supposedly were released, Mr. Speaker, like some of these activists, who were rounded up in a catch-and-release program of the Castro regime.

The administration hails this list of 53 as a victory, ignoring the fact that

hundreds of political and anti-regime activists like these were arrested and detained immediately before and after the announcement of the changes, and almost 2,000 people were arrested or detained last year alone. This infamous list of 53 that has been praised by this administration and the Castro regime is another ruse.

Over a dozen individuals on that list were released prior to the December 17 announcement, including Carlos Andres Sanchez Perez. He was released over 1 year ago. Some were arrested even before June. Catch-and-release is the new program, the new playbook of the Castro regime, and Obama deliberately has fallen for that ruse.

Now, the regime will feel emboldened because the United States has just signed off on its mistreatment of its citizens, and President Obama has extended an economic lifeline to the regime that will allow it to continue this repression.

Before there can be any discussion of changing our policy toward Cuba, Mr. Speaker, all political prisoners must be released, not this fake list of 53; fair and multiparty elections must be held; and the fundamental human rights of every Cuban must be respected.

Mr. Speaker, I warn my colleagues to pay close attention to what the Obama administration is attempting to do in Cuba because this will track with its attempts at reconciliation with Iran, another rogue nation and state sponsor of terrorism. The administration's efforts in Cuba have been the test case for Iran, and the two have paralleled each other.

While the administration was holding secret talks with the Castro regime, we know that he was penning secret letters to Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei and conceding to Iran the right to enrich uranium.

These concessions to Cuba are just the tip of the iceberg, and it will open the doors to similar measures in Iran

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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